



Valley Broadcast Legends

Oral Histories

2018/010/002

Oral interview of

Dick Cable

January 25, 2017

Interviewer: Deborah Pacyna

Center for Sacramento History
551 Sequoia Pacific Blvd
Sacramento, CA 95811-0229
(916) 808-7072
csh@cityofsacramento.org
www.centerforsacramentohistory.org
© Center for Sacramento History, 2018

Dick Cable began his broadcast career as a triple-duty radio announcer, deejay, and newscaster. Beginning in 1958, he worked as a broadcast news reporter for more than a decade in Colorado, Oregon, and Wyoming radio, and in Idaho television. From 1969-1998 he worked for Sacramento's KXTV Channel 10, where he was the main news anchor for all the station's primetime newscasts, and authored and broadcast Cable's Comments, a regularly scheduled news commentary show on major public issues.

[00:00:00]

Dick Cable: I'm Dick Cable. I spent just about twenty-eight years as an anchor and commentator at News 10 in Sacramento [California]. Wasn't always called News 10. Isn't called that now, is it? *[Laughs]* But I had a wonderful career and pleasant retirement. Nice to spend a few minutes with you guys.

I graduated from the Northeast School of Broadcasting in Boston, Massachusetts, and I got four job offers after I graduated. The first one was at a radio station in Fort Collins, Colorado, so that was my trip back out West from the East, because I grew up, graduated from high school in New York, on Long Island, and went to Johns Hopkins University as a premed student.

Then I lived for a year and went to school for a year in Germany, where my father was working as an editor of the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper. I went to an American school in Germany, the University of Maryland Munich branch. Who knew that such a thing existed?

[00:01:48]

Pacyna: That was college or high school?

[00:01:48]

Cable: College. That was my sophomore year, was the one I spent in Germany. That was the last formal education I had before I got into the broadcasting business.

[00:02:06]

Pacyna: So you never graduated from college?

[00:02:07]

Cable: I did not.

[00:02:09]

Pacyna: When you applied for all your jobs, your broadcasting jobs, where were you at the time?

[00:02:14]

Cable: Well, that's when I went to the School of Broadcasting in Boston. Then when I graduated, as I say, I got four job offers and accepted the one in Fort Collins, Colorado, and I was there for a year and a half or so.

[00:02:38]

Pacyna: What'd you do?

[00:02:39]

Cable: I did everything you can possibly imagine. I was a deejay, I was a newscaster, a weather guy. I did everything they required, just somebody at a small-town radio station. It was great. It's a wonderful way to begin.

[00:03:00]

Pacyna: And you were how old?

[00:03:02]

Cable: Early twenties. And then I got a job offer and went to Cheyenne, Wyoming, out of Fort Collins, Colorado, worked there for a little over a year. Then from there I wound up going to Boise, Idaho, and getting into television.

[00:03:22]

Pacyna: First job?

[00:03:24]

Cable: That's where my first TV career began.

[00:03:26]

Pacyna: And what was your role there in Boise?

[00:03:29]

Cable: In TV?

[00:03:30]

Pacyna: Mm-hmm.

[00:03:32]

Cable: An interesting thing, because I not only did the news, but I did game shows. What was the name of that game show I did? I've got it written down somewhere, and I even have some pictures of it from back then.

[00:03:55]

Pacyna: So you were kind of a host of the game show. Was it a giveaway with prizes?

[00:04:02]

Cable: Yeah, it was a very, very localized thing. It wasn't—

[00:04:07]

Pacyna: *Price is Right*. It wasn't *Price is Right*.

[00:04:12]

Cable: That sort of a thing.

[00:04:19]

Pacyna: So that was Boise.

[00:04:20]

Cable: Mm-hmm.

[00:04:21]

Pacyna: And how long were you there?

[00:04:22]

Cable: I was there, I think, over six years, and then a fellow who worked in Sacramento came up to Boise to see his brother. I think he worked at Channel 10, came up to see his brother, and saw me at the Boise station and invited me to come and apply for a job at Channel 10. That's how I made the shift.

[00:05:02]

Pacyna: And what year was that?

[00:05:04]

Cable: Sixty-nine.

[00:05:07]

Pacyna: So you started at Channel 10 in '69?

[00:05:09]

Cable: Yeah.

[00:05:10]

Pacyna: And stayed there?

[00:05:12]

Cable: Till the end of my career.

[00:05:17]

Pacyna: Wow! To '98?

[00:05:19]

Cable: Mm-hmm.

[00:05:20]

Pacyna: That's almost thirty years.

[00:05:23]

Cable: Twenty-eight years. Seems to me that color was just beginning when I accepted my first job at the Boise TV station, KEST. And I remember very unusual times there doing what we did. As I say, I not only did the newscast, but a game show and I actually went out and shot film, came back and processed the film, cut and edited the pieces, and put them on the air. I remember one time that process was so difficult that I was like six minutes late for my cue getting on the air. They just stayed there on some sort of a frozen image until I could get there, hand them the film, and then finally go on the air.

[00:06:36]

Pacyna: So you had to actually shoot your own stuff and then introduce it?

[00:06:40]

Cable: And run it through the processor and cut the pieces and create a piece the way I wanted it to be on the air.

[00:06:50]

Pacyna: Now, were you a reporter or an anchor at the time?

[00:06:52]

Cable: Both.

[00:06:54]

Pacyna: When did you know you wanted to be in broadcasting?

[00:06:59]

Cable: I think while I was in school, in high school or just getting into college. I got compliments on my voice, and somebody said, "You should be a broadcaster." I said [demonstrates], you know. Then when I had a chance, I took a class in broadcaster or something like that, and it led to a career.

[00:07:33]

Pacyna: So anyway, the influence of your parents.

[00:07:35]

Cable: My father—did I explain to you already—was a magazine and newspaper editor, so he was a professional. Not a broadcaster, but an actual editor. And I've got some *Look* magazines that he was the photo editor of back in my office there, if you want to

look at them. I suppose he was my inspiration as somebody in the news business, but the evolvement of me into what I did was not in any way directly connected to that.

After working at *Newsweek* and *Look* magazine, he went into World War II and that kind of changed his life, and that's how he ended up returning to Germany, where he'd served as a soldier, and became an editor with the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper, which was published in Germany for our troops overseas.

[00:09:02]

Pacyna: Was he supportive of broadcasting, of your career and the direction you were going?

[00:09:09]

Cable: Yes, he was, but he left this Earth before he knew much about what I was doing. He actually died in Germany, so he never got to hear me as a broadcaster.

[00:09:25]

Pacyna: How about your mom?

[00:09:27]

Cable: She and my father were divorced quite a while before, and my mother lived on that ranch in New Mexico right there. That's one of the places where I grew up. Just beyond those trees in front of the mountain is the Pecos River, which ran right through the ranch that my grandfather acquired in like 1903. I went to school for the third, fourth, and fifth grades there, and then back to New York for most of the rest of my school.

[00:10:22]

Pacyna: Did she ever hear you as a broadcaster?

[00:10:25]

Cable: No, she didn't. No, she died before I ever became one, at age forty-seven, so she died a youngster.

[00:10:39]

Pacyna: Now, when you had the opportunity to go to Channel 10 in Sacramento, what was the reason? Was it more money? Was it the excitement? Was it a promotion?

[00:10:54]

Cable: The money question is interesting because Joe Lake [phonetic], who was the general manager at the time, accepted my employment there and he said he wasn't going to give me a raise at all from what I'd been earning in Boise. He was going to start me off at that. I think I started real low, but then I got a raise after a little while. Very strange, unfriendly kind of guy, Joe Lake was. But what the heck.

But the reason I came down is—I think his name was Dave Brown, who worked at Channel 10 in the advertising area somewhere. He came up to visit his brother in Boise and saw me on the air there and invited me to apply for the job that was being vacated by Charles Rowe [phonetic] at Channel 10.

[00:12:22]

Pacyna: So you got here. You didn't make any more money than you were making in Boise.

[00:12:27]

Cable: No.

[00:12:28]

Pacyna: Any regrets when you started?

[00:12:31]

Cable: I don't recall that there were. It's where I was and had to be.

[00:12:38]

Pacyna: Right. And it was just your assignment to do the—were you anchoring any of the main shows?

[00:12:45]

Cable: Mm-hmm. I think initially they had me anchoring like a 6 o'clock show after the network news.

[00:12:59]

Pacyna: Solo?

[00:13:07]

Cable: I can't remember if it was initially solo or not, but I co-anchored with men. First, Alan Frio, I think, and I co-anchored for a little bit before the first women came into the scene.

[00:13:29]

Pacyna: Now, that must have been an interesting time—

[00:13:34]

Cable: It was.

[00:13:34]

Pacyna: —with the advent of women anchors. Do you recall who the first person was and what it was like and what people were talking about?

[00:13:43]

Cable: I've got some photographs of that time that probably need to be reminded of who everything was, but, you know, Beth Ruyak was one of the co-anchors. I don't know if you listen to her on the radio now. I do kind of regularly myself. Sandy Drew [phonetic] was one of the first.

[00:14:15]

Pacyna: Was that awkward, or what was going on at the time in the industry?

[00:14:20]

Cable: When female anchors were coming in? I don't recall any personal feelings of awkwardness about it. Just seemed like a revolutionary time, and fun to be there. I actually got to meet [Walter] Cronkite and got him to autograph a photo for me.

[00:14:52]

Pacyna: Wow. How did that happen?

[00:14:53]

Cable: I visited the studio in New York, the CBS studio, and I took a photo with me and he signed it. I've got it hanging in my office too.

[00:15:11]

Pacyna: Was that one of your role models?

[00:15:13]

Cable: Yes.

[00:15:13]

Pacyna: Anybody else?

[00:15:25]

Cable: Cronkite's pretty much it.

[00:15:30]

Pacyna: Everybody tries to emulate somebody, I think.

[00:15:33]

Cable: Mm-hmm.

[00:15:36]

Pacyna: So you were anchoring for almost thirty years. Did you ever get out and were you ever on assignment?

[00:15:45]

Cable: Yes.

[00:15:47]

Pacyna: So for what?

[00:15:48]

Cable: Not very often, but there were a couple of times during—you ask about what, I'm not sure I can remember.

[00:16:02]

Pacyna: A political convention, maybe?

[00:16:04]

Cable: Yes, I did get sent to Houston for a political convention held there. I've got a T-shirt from there.

[00:16:18]

Pacyna: But mostly in studio?

[00:16:20]

Cable: Yeah.

[00:16:23]

Pacyna: How would you summarize your career in terms of the satisfaction that you had?

[00:16:30]

Cable: I'd say it was highly satisfactory and that I was very lucky to have had a decent voice and one that was appreciated and got me further and further into the value of news, and we did all right. I don't think I was dangerously egotistic about what I was doing, but like everybody thinks he's important, you know, and managed to get through it without getting too swaggery.

[00:17:31]

Pacyna: Now, you must have run into some pretty big egos along the way.

[00:17:37]

Cable: Oh, yeah, I'm sure I did, but I don't recall anybody who was what I'd call harmfully egotistic. Stan did pretty well. *[Laughter]*

[00:17:59]

Pacyna: Your competitor.

[00:18:02]

Cable: Yeah.

[00:18:03]

Pacyna: Did you have a good relationship or was it—

[00:18:06]

Cable: We've spent a little bit of time together at—I don't know if it's the Valley Broadcast Legends or some of the other things, but we've not had really strong, close personal ties.

[00:18:33]

Pacyna: When you look at the news today and you think back about when you were in it and you were reporting, what are your thoughts?

[00:18:47]

Cable: I guess I'm still a daily news watcher, but I think it's a little bit more corporate, I guess you would say, than it was in the earlier day, although it's always been quite corporate.

[00:19:23]

Pacyna: What do you mean?

[00:19:25]

Cable: That there's less freedom of expression on the air, more corporate rigor behind what's going on, but nothing too bad.

[00:19:48]

Pacyna: Are you troubled at all by the politicizing of the news?

[00:19:54]

Cable: Yes, some of that's quite awkward.

[00:20:05]

Pacyna: You did "Cable's Comments." Was that unique in the market or was that something everybody did?

[00:20:13]

Cable: No, it was unique, and I was very privileged to do that. A lot of times, if I had any concern about the politics of what I was saying, I had to take it up to Joe Lake and show it to him in advance, and a couple of times he said, "No, you can't do that." So in my comment files I may have a couple of ones that were prohibited.

[00:20:52]

Pacyna: Was that a weekly, a daily, or what was that?

[00:20:56]

Cable: That changed over time. I can't remember if it was ever daily or if it was two or three times a week, because I wasn't always able to come up with a daily thing.

[00:21:23]

Pacyna: You have a lot of those, don't you?

[00:21:26]

Cable: Yes.

[00:21:27]

Pacyna: Over your career, do you recall how many you did?

[00:21:29]

Cable: I have them all, and there are two boxes of those out there with the monthly dates on them, and every once in a while I'll go in and say, "What did I think about this?" Lucky I got to say that.

[00:21:53]

Pacyna: Yeah. Do you have anything else that you'd like to add about your career?

[00:21:59]

Cable: Just how lucky I felt to have gotten along the way and where I did and retired and living somewhat comfortably with my lovely wife and my puppies and my kittens. I have five children from my previous marriage, and me and my kids get to visit quite a bit, so all doing very well.

[00:22:41]

Pacyna: That's great. No regrets?

[00:22:45]

Cable: Generally speaking, no. I mean, you can't get by without some regrets.